

Overview of the perceived Influence of Insecurity on Academic Performance in front lines Local Government Secondary Schools in Niger State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to assess the perceived influenced of insecurity on academic performance among frontline local government areas in Niger State, Nigeria. Three objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. Descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised of all the key local government secondary schools with security challenge in Niger State, Nigeria this includes Kontagora, Magama, Mariga, Munya, Rafi, Rijau, Shiroro, and Wushishi. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to form the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection for the study was researchers designed a questionnaire that was divided into three sections; level of insecurity, impact of insecurity, and measures implemented. The instrument (questionnaire) was validated by experts and Cronbach's alpha's value was computed to ascertain the internal consistency. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was obtained to be 0.81. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a criterion mean of 2.50 as the basis for judgment. A calculated mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as a perceived high-level impact of insecurity among frontline local government areas of Niger State. Hence, it was recommended among others that Niger State Government in conjunction with local government should make a concerted efforts in prioritize and address insecurity as it is fundamental to improving academic performance in the affected regions in addition to implement and reinforce robust security measures within schools, supported by proactive counselling services and comprehensive support systems to alleviate students' fears and create an environment conducive to learning.

Keywords: academic performance, perceived, insecurity, overview, schools

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INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the issue of insecurity has surged to prominence across numerous regions worldwide. Nigeria, one of Africa's most populous nations, has not escaped the clutches of this pressing challenge. Various parts of the country according to Aleyomi and Nwagwu (2023) have faced a range of security threats. Among these areas in Nigeria, Niger State has not been spared from the scourge of insecurity, subjecting many families within Niger State to endure a distressing upsurge in violent crimes as an unfortunate reality of their daily existence (Olapeju & Peter, 2021).

Indeed, quite a few local governments in Niger State such as Kontagora, Mariga, Munya, Rafi, Shiroro, and Wushishi and even the once peaceful Minna, Niger State capital, have swiftly transformed into realms marked by bloodshed and turmoil (Adekunle et al., 2023). Just recently as reported by Okuwuwa (2023) that on 14 August 2023, This Day newspaper reported a harrowing incident in Niger State, where no fewer than 13 soldiers lost their lives to bandits, with the military also

losing a helicopter during the evacuation of casualties. This incident unfolded around Kundu in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State, leaving at least 10 other security personnel injured in the heinous attack by the bandits.

Consequently, insecurity has emerged as the paramount issue afflicting Niger State in recent times, and a lasting solution remains elusive (Egonu et al., 2023). Regrettably, the problem continually metamorphoses, with what initially began as cattle rustling in Niger State now transforming into kidnapping perpetrated by the same suspected cattle rustlers (Sanchi et al., 2022). In an attempt however, to find a lasting solution, the insecurity problem is escalated day by day even though the fundamental basics of any community encompass peace, robust economic activities, and education.

In the realm of education, the core activities involve teaching and learning, necessitating a conducive environment, wherein both students and educators can feel secure. This security is pivotal, especially for the effective instruction and absorption of knowledge, particularly in core subjects such as English language, mathematics, and

basic science, which demand the undivided attention of learners for successful learning outcomes.

Exploring the overview of perceived influence of insecurity on academic performance in Niger State schools, especially within the frontline local government areas in Nigeria, encompasses a broad spectrum of literature. The literature on insecurity presents a multitude of perspectives and findings. To supplement the ongoing investigation, a study by Umar et al. (2023) is considered pivotal. Additionally, several other studies, including those by Jimoh et al. (2022), Ojukwu (2017), Ojukwu and Nwanna (2015), Ojukwu and Onuoha (2016), and Okpaga et al. (2012) delve into the diverse forms of insecurity prevalent in Nigerian communities and their specific impacts on educational institutions. These studies typically utilized structured questionnaires to gather data from respondents. The participants in these studies primarily comprised teachers, parents, and guardians with children attending secondary schools or of secondary school age. The collected data underwent analysis employing descriptive statistics and the chi-square test. The findings across these studies collectively indicate that insecurity has had an adverse impact on secondary school students' academic performance, school attendance, and enrollment rates.

In view of the circumstances therefore, this study seeks to delve into the overview of the perceived influence of insecurity on academic performance in schools across Niger State, specifically focusing on key local government areas. The objective is to comprehend the broader ramifications of insecurity on education. By unearthing the underlying issues and proposing viable remedies, we aspire to contribute to the advancement of educational opportunities and outcomes for students who must navigate the challenges posed by insecurity.

Statement of Problem

Niger State, which used to be known by its role in power generation, agriculture, tourism, culture, mineral resources, historical heritage, and of course education have swiftly transformed into what could be describe as insecure zone. Niger State in recent times has witnessed a distressing decline not only on cultivation of crop and mineral resources but also its educational standards. This decline can be attributed to the pernicious activities of bandits, kidnappers, and cattle rustlers in various local government areas within Niger State, namely Kontagora, Magama, Mariga, Munya, Rafi, Rijau, Shiroro, and Wushishi. The consequences of this deteriorating security situation are far-reaching. Families are being pushed into the depths of poverty, and existing school facilities are being systematically destroyed. The pervasive climate of violence, marked by killings and kidnappings, has sown fear and anxiety in the hearts of the populace. As a result, boarding schools are forced to shut their doors, and those tasked with overseeing the education system, including inspectors, supervisors, teachers, and even parents, grapple with profound apprehension in the execution of their responsibilities concerning the educational development of the youth. This study therefore seeks to investigate into the perceived influence of insecurity on academic performance in Niger State schools within key local government with a view to understanding the broader implications of insecurity on education.

Objectives of Study

1. To overview the perceived influence of insecurity on academic performance of students in Niger State.
2. To overview the perceived influence of insecurity on student enrollment in these affected areas.

3. To examine the measures implemented to counter the activities of bandits, kidnappers, and cattle rustlers.

Research Questions

1. Does perceived insecurity influence the academic achievement of students living in the frontline local government areas of Niger State?
2. What influence does perceived insecurity have on student enrollment in the affected area?
3. What measures have been implemented to mitigate the activities of bandits and other related incidents?

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive cross-sectional survey research design was adopted for the study; the design is considered suitable when an identified finding of a studied population is to describe (Mutudi et al., 2020).

The population of the study comprised of all the key local government with security challenge in Niger State, this includes Kontagora, Magama, Mariga, Munya, Rafi, Rijau, Shiroro, and Wushishi. Purposive sampling technique was adopted to form the sample for the study. The instrument used for data collection for the study was Researchers designed a questionnaire that was divided into three sections; level of insecurity, impact of insecurity and measures implemented. The instrument (questionnaire) was validated by experts and Cronbach's alpha's value was computed to ascertain the internal consistency. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was obtained to be 0.81. The collected data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation with a criterion mean of 2.50 as the basis for judgment. A calculated mean score of 2.50 and above was interpreted as a perceived high-level impact of insecurity among frontline local government areas of Niger State.

DATA ANALYSIS & RESULTS

Research Question 1

Research quest'on 1 is, as follows: Does perceived insecurity influence the academic achievement of students living in the frontline local government areas of Niger State?

Table 1 displays the mean and standard deviations of respondents regarding the level of insecurity, and it perceive influence on the academic achievement among of students in the frontline local government area of Niger State, Nigeria. The results indicate items 1-9 had mean ratings of 3.42, 3.55, 3.42, 3.54, 3.54, 3.38, 3.51, 3.27, and 3.22 with corresponding standard deviations of .562, .624, .595, .589, .565, .554, .595, .608, and .643, respectively. Additionally, the overall grand mean score for nine items is 3.43 surpassing the decision mean score of 2.50. This suggest that insecurity significantly influence the academic achievement of students residing in the frontline local government areas of Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Question 2

Research quest'on 's, as follows: What influence does perceived insecurity have on student enrollment in the affected area?

Table 2 displays the mean and standard deviations of respondents regarding the perceived influence of insecurity on student enrollment

Table 1. Level of insecurity & its effect on academic performance of students

No	Items	n	M	SD	Decision
1	Does security situation within frontline local government impact academic performance?	366	3.42	.562	Accept
2	Prior to current state of insecurity, our students excelled academically.	366	3.55	.624	Accept
3	Upon hearing signals of bandit activity, we promptly suspend school operations.	366	3.42	.595	Accept
4	Academic activities have significantly decreased due to prevailing insecurity.	366	3.54	.589	Accept
5	Insecurity has had a profound impact on our economy.	366	3.54	.565	Accept
6	Teachers face challenges accessing their workplaces due to unsafe roads.	366	3.38	.554	Accept
7	Students struggle to concentrate due to fears about potential incidents while at school or traveling to & from it.	366	3.51	.595	Accept
8	Following attacks in our community or its vicinity, students tend to forget material taught during those periods.	366	3.27	.608	Accept
9	Traumatic experiences resulting from insecurity alter our students' attitudes towards learning.	366	3.22	.643	Accept

Note. n: Number of students; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation; Grand mean=3.43; & Decision mean=2.50

Table 2. Impact of insecurity on students' enrollment

No	Items	n	M	SD	Decision
1	Does insecurity impact school enrollment in affected areas?	366	3.09	.768	Accept
2	Do parents in affected local government areas feel discouraged about sending their children to school?	366	2.98	.802	Accept
3	Are teachers & students affected by stigma within society?	366	3.08	.845	Accept
4	Parents find it increasingly challenging to send their children to school because they can not freely access farms or markets.	366	2.89	.899	Accept
5	We feel a greater sense of security when vigilantes are present compared to when there are military forces around.	366	2.85	.893	Accept

Note. n: Number of students; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation; Grand mean=2.98; & Decision mean=2.50

Table 3. Measures implemented to mitigate activities of bandits

No	Items	n	M	SD	Decision
1	Is special training required for teachers & students given current security situation?	366	2.27	.984	Disagree
2	Does society strongly disapprove of kidnapping & rustling activities?	366	2.80	.916	Agree
3	Are there collective community initiatives to combat banditry & other criminal activities?	366	2.29	.911	Disagree
4	Is community's collaborative effort endorsed by the Government & provided with security & logistical support?	366	2.36	1.148	Disagree

Note. n: Number of students; M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation; Grand mean=2.43; & Decision mean=2.50

in the frontline local government area of Niger State, Nigeria. The results indicate items 1-5 had mean ratings of 3.09, 2.98, 3.08, 2.89, and 2.85 with corresponding standard deviations of .768, .802, .845, .899, and .893, respectively. Additionally, the overall grand mean score for five items is 2.98 surpassing the decision mean score of 2.50. This suggest that insecurity significantly influence the student enrollment in the frontline local government area of Niger State, Nigeria.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 is, as follows: What measures have been implemented to mitigate the activities of bandits and other related incidents? **Table 3** displays the mean and standard deviations of respondents regarding measures implemented to mitigate the activities of bandits and other related incidents in frontline local government area of Niger State, Nigeria. The results indicate items 1-4 had mean ratings of 2.27, 2.80, 2.29, and 2.36 with corresponding standard deviations of .984, .916, .911, and 1.148, respectively. Additionally, the overall grand mean score for four items is 2.43 less than the decision mean score of 2.50. This suggest that measures implemented did not mitigate the activities of bandits and other related incidents in the frontline local government area of Niger State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The mean ratings ranging from 3.22 to 3.55 across nine items, with an overall grand mean score of 3.43, surpassing decision mean score of 2.50, suggest a substantial impact of insecurity on academic achievement. Findings reveal that insecurity significantly hampers students' academic performance within the region. The consistently high mean ratings imply that students' educational accomplishments are

notably affected, likely due to heightened stress, anxiety, and an overall unstable learning environment caused by insecurity. This study was in consonance with study carried out by Umar et al. (2023) on the effects of insecurity on students' academic performance in Katsina State schools, specifically focusing on the key local government areas.

The mean ratings between 2.85 and 3.09 across five items, with an overall grand mean score of 2.98, exceeding the decision mean score of 2.50, indicate that insecurity significantly affects student enrollment in the frontline local government area. These results suggest that security concerns have a substantial impact on parents' decisions to enroll their children in schools within the region. The findings highlight how insecurity acts as a deterrent to student enrollment, potentially due to safety apprehensions among parents.

The mean ratings ranging from 2.27 to 2.80 across four items, with an overall grand mean score of 2.43, falling below the decision mean score of 2.50, indicate that the implemented measures have not been entirely effective in mitigating banditry and related incidents. These findings suggest that despite efforts to address security concerns, the measures implemented have not significantly curbed the activities of bandits and related incidents in the region.

Overall, these findings collectively emphasize the severity of insecurity's impact on academic achievement, student enrollment, and the limitations in the effectiveness of implemented measures in the frontline local government areas of Niger State, Nigeria. They underscore the urgent need for more comprehensive and efficient strategies to address security challenges, ensuring a safe and conducive environment for students' education and well-being in the region.

CONCLUSIONS

The research reveals that perceived insecurity significantly influenced and disrupts the broader learning environment, fostering an atmosphere of instability and unease. Such circumstances inhibit students' trust in their peers, educators, and educational institutions, thereby reducing participation, limiting interactions, and inhibiting collaborative efforts. Consequently, this impacts not only academic achievements but also obstructs social and emotional development, hindering the acquisition of essential critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Recommendations

The following recommendation was made based on the findings and conclusion of this study:

1. Niger State Government in conjunction with local government should make a concerted efforts in prioritize and address insecurity as it is fundamental to improving academic performance in the affected regions.
2. Niger State should implement and reinforce robust security measures within schools, supported by proactive counseling services and comprehensive support systems to alleviate students' fears and create an environment conducive to learning.
3. There is need for stake holders in the education sector to foster open communication channels within schools to encourage dialogue about safety concerns and ensure that students feel heard and supported.
4. The Ministry of Education should promote positive relationships among students, educators, and the school community to foster trust and a sense of security.
5. Encourage and facilitate the reporting of safety concerns among students to promptly address security issues within the educational setting.
6. Government should emphasize the urgent need for collaborative efforts between educational institutions and policymakers to prioritize students' safety and well-being.
7. There is a need to recognize and acknowledge the severe repercussions of insecurity on academic achievements, emphasizing the need for proactive measures to mitigate these effects.
8. Schools in the affected areas should create an environment, where students feel empowered, motivated, and secure to enhance their academic success.

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Declaration of interest: The author declares no competing interest.

Data availability: Data generated or analyzed during this study are available from the author on request.

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